

<http://www.epa.gov/R5Super/npl/indiana/IND000715490.htm>

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## Region 5 Superfund (SF)

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EPA Region 5 Records Ctr.



279361

**U.S. EPA REGION 5**  
ELKHART COUNTY  
ELKHART

### CONRAIL RAIL YARD (ELKHART)

**EPA ID# IND000715490**

Last Updated: September, 2006

Congressional District # 2

### Site Description

The Conrail Railyard, which comprises approximately 675 acres, began operations in 1956 as part of the New York Central Railroad and continued operations as a subsidiary of the Penn Central Transportation Company until 1976. In the early 1960s, a railcar containing carbon tetrachloride was punctured, and the contents were emptied onto the ground. From 1962 to 1968, numerous citizens' complaints were filed regarding oil discharges. In 1976, Conrail took over the railyard's functions. From 1976 to 1986, the railyard experienced spills and releases of oil, diesel fuel, hydrochloric acid, caustic soda, and various petroleum-related substances. Track-cleaning fluids and engine degreasers were also used and disposed of at the site. In 1986, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) discovered volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the groundwater near the site. Before the cleanup was performed, the population north and west of the site obtained its drinking water from private residential wells. Further north and east of the site, the Elkhart Water Works serves approximately 41,000 people.

### Site Responsibility

This site is being addressed through federal and potentially responsible parties' actions.

### Threats and Contaminants

Wells in the vicinity of the site were found to contain up to 5,000 parts per billion (ppb) carbon tetrachloride and similar concentrations of trichloroethylene (TCE). Bottled water and filters were provided immediately to residents. Two contaminant plumes were identified, and the overall area potentially impacted by the site is approximately 2,500 acres (including the railyard). Additionally, nine residences had indoor vapor levels of carbon tetrachloride that exceeded the action level.

### Cleanup Progress

A Unilateral Administrative Order (UAO) was issued to Conrail and Penn Central in 1992 to implement the 1991 Record of Decision (ROD). Conrail complied with this UAO. Approximately 458 of the 475 residences and businesses were hooked up to the Elkhart city water supply by spring 1996. The remaining 27 residences refused access. In 1995, a UAO was issued to Conrail and Penn Central to perform the additional hookups to the Elkhart city water supply that were required under the final 1994 ROD. Both companies complied with this UAO. Approximately 648 of the 683 residences and businesses were provided with an alternate water supply (35 residences refused access). The remainder of the final ROD, including implementing the groundwater remedy and testing and cleaning up VOC vapors in basements in a small area near the Osceola Drag Strip, were implemented under a Consent Decree (CD) with Conrail and Penn Central. This CD was entered on November 10, 1997. VOC vapor testing was performed from late 1998-2000, and seven homes were found to have carbon tetrachloride vapor levels above the level of concern for the site. These homes have been provided with basement venting units, which have successfully mitigated the vapors. A Record of Decision Amendment, which allowed for a technical impracticability

waiver for the ground water source contamination on the rail yard was executed on September 27, 2000. The result of the ROD Amendment was that the source areas on the rail yard were hydraulically contained instead of restoring the source areas to below drinking water standards. Construction for the remainder of the final cleanup was completed in June 2004. A five year review was completed on September 27, 2004. This review indicated that the remedy for the Site continued to be protective of human health and the environment.

## **Success Story**

There were several success stories at the Conrail site. First, after the discovery of ground water contamination, the EPA emergency removal program responded very quickly and provided affected residents with bottled water and whole house filter systems to break the human exposure pathway.

Second, the level of cooperation between EPA, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, and CLEAN was very high. A prime example of this was when, during the public comment period for the final ROD, CLEAN suggested that indoor vapor testing be conducted, EPA included such a requirement in the final ROD. After Conrail conducted this testing, nine homes had carbon tetrachloride vapor levels that exceeded the applicable action level for the site. These homes were provided with basement venting units (similar to "radon units"), and the carbon tetrachloride vapor levels were reduced to well below acceptable concentrations. The Conrail Site was one of the first in the nation to identify and remedy indoor vapor problems associated with ground water contamination from a Superfund site.

Last, Conrail and EPA worked cooperatively to identify and address an additional off-site source area of carbon tetrachloride that appears to be the major contributor to the indoor vapor problems. This source area is being addressed by the installation and operation of a ground water recirculating well, which should allow the basement venting units to be shut down and removed in the future.

## **Community Involvement**

The community was heavily involved throughout the process of studying and cleaning up the Site. The Citizen's League for Environmental Action Now (CLEAN) received several technical assistance grants (TAGs) which allowed them to hire a technical expert to assist them in understanding and commenting on the various aspects of the site cleanup activities.

## **Congressional Interest**

There has been little congressional interest in this site.

## **Property Reuse**

The site was and continues to be an operating railyard; thus, there are no reuse issues.

## **Contacts**

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## **Aliases**

COUNTY RD 1  
CONRAIL RAILYARD ELKHART

### **Site Profile Information**

This profile provides you with information on EPA's cleanup progress at this Superfund site.